December Holiday Fire Safety
Fire Service Campaign Kit

December 15-31, 2005

Alberta
Municipal Affairs

Holiday Fire Safety Campaign Kit

December 15-31, 2005

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Fire Prevention and Safety Tips

The safety tips sheets have been removed from the kit, updated and posted on our website. For safety tips sheets, visit the FCO website at http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/mahome/fco/FireFacts.cfm

Online features

Scotch Pine Christmas Tree Fire Video (NIST)
Candle Fires by Month (1993-2003)
ULC Media kit: http://www.ul.com/media/opdecmediakit.html

Access to the Online Kit

1. Visit the Fire Commissioner's Office website at http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco.
2. Under the 'FAST FACTS' section, click on the "December Holiday Fire Safety Campaign" option
3. Choose your type of organization (Media or Fire Service).

For a hard copy version of the campaign kit or for more information on the December holiday season campaign visit the Fire Commissioner's Office website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco or phone Te-Jay Smart at (780-644-4692).

Message from Alberta's Fire Commissioner

Dear Fire Chief,

Each year, the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office sponsors a Fire Safety Campaign from December 15 to 31 to encourage fire departments to raise awareness in their communities of the increased fire risk during the holiday season. This campaign kit has been developed to assist your department in this task.

In response to your feedback on previous campaign kits, the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) has made some exciting changes to this year's kit. The safety tips sheets have been removed from the kit, updated and posted on our website under the heading 'Fire Facts' at http://www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/mahome/fco/FireFacts.cfm. As well, a fire event planning guide, children's activity worksheets and a fundraising letter have been included to assist your fire service with its public awareness activities. Please use and duplicate the contents of this campaign kit to support your holiday fire safety activities.

I encourage each and every Alberta fire department to participate in this year's December Holiday Fire Safety Campaign. By teaching the public to be aware of fire hazards, to install, test, and maintain smoke alarms, and how to react in a fire emergency, you can help protect property and save lives and prevent fires from starting.

For more information on these resources and other planned events, visit the Fire Commissioner's Office website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco or phone Te-Jay Smart at (780-644-4692).

Best wishes for a fire-safe holiday season!

Yours in fire safety,

Pat Graham
Fire Commissioner

Holiday Fire Hazards

Each year during the period of December 15 to 31, the number of fires, deaths, injuries and property losses all increase compared to the rest of the year.

December Holiday Fire Incidence[1]

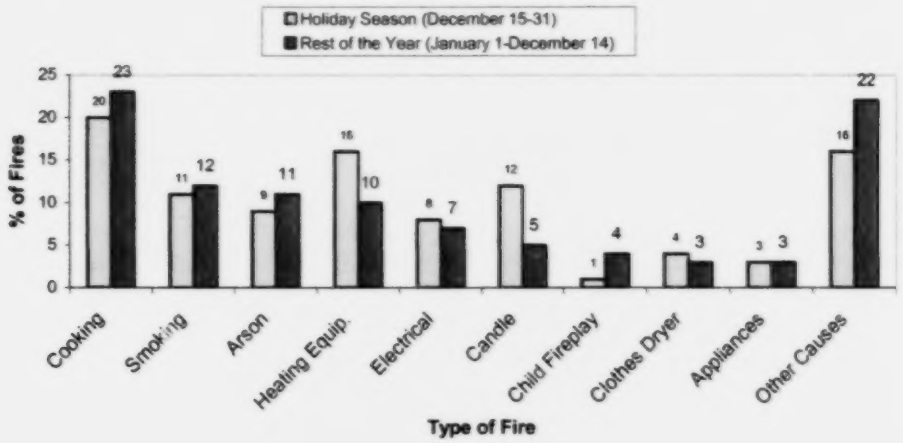
Fires: up **32 per cent**
Fire Deaths: up **40 per cent**
Fire injuries: up **48 per cent**
Property losses: up **27 per cent**

Why more fires during the December holidays?

In addition to being a time of fun, joyous activities, the December holiday season is also a time of high fire risk and danger. The heightened excitement and extra distractions of visiting relatives, children staying home on school holidays, shopping, decorating, cooking, and parties can place a heavy demand on everyone's time and attention causing many people to overlook basic safety measures. The additional hazards of winter, such as home heating and the use of space heaters, increase exposure to unsafe situations, including fire.

What are the common causes of December holiday fires?

December Holiday Home Fire Causes: Seasonal Comparison
(1999-2003)



Throughout the year, the major cause of home fires is cooking (see chart above). However, during the December holiday season the number of fires involving candles, home heating equipment, clothes dryers, and electrical sources increase significantly. Therefore, during the December holidays one must take special precautions when cooking, using candles, heating equipment, clothes dryers and electricity.

- **Candles:** up **140 per cent**
- **Home heating:** up **60 per cent**
- **Clothes Dryers:** up **33 per cent**
- **Electrical:** up **14 per cent**

[1] The statistics identified use Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office data from the year 1999 to 2003 and compare the 17 days of the holiday season (December 15 – December 31) with a 17-day average for the rest of the year.

December Holiday Fire Safety

Event Planner

Follow these tips to promote a successful Holiday Fire Safety Campaign in your community.

What Can I Do?

- Give a presentation to a local school, community group or senior's home
- Hand out the children's fire safety worksheets enclosed in this kit
- Deliver a community-wide event, such as a Santa Clause fire station visit, fire department tours (decorate hall with Christmas decorations), Christmas fire safety display booths, children's holiday activities (crawl low under smoke with Santa, junior firefighter Christmas themed obstacle course), chimney and/or furnace home inspection programs, fire drill at the mall with Santa and Sparky…

How do I do it?

1. Identify the December holiday fire problem(s) in your community (high risk groups/factors)
2. Outline your objectives/goals (to change the problem behaviour)
3. Select your target audience (who can bring about the behaviour change: high risk group or other)
4. Research your target audience (know how they learn and what motivates them)
5. Inventory your resources (anything or anyone to aid in your preparation or development)
6. Determine message content (based on problem and audience)
7. Determine the message format (lecture, illustration, discussion, demonstration)
8. Determine the best time and place to deliver the message
9. Keep the message brief and to the point
10. Make the message fun and interactive for your audience
11. Dress for success. Wear your uniform or your fire gear
12. Provide fire prevention and safety handouts for all age groups
13. Reward the audience for their participation! (food and/or prizes)
14. Get participation from the top. The presence of high-ranking fire and other community officials will enforce and support of your message
15. Advertise, if applicable. Your event won't be a success if no one knows about it. Send out news releases

How do I get support?

1. Work with the Media

- Develop a partnership with your local media representatives.
- Send a news release to local media outlets, identifying your holiday fire safety activities and invite them to attend.
- A fill in the blank news release is available on the next page for you to download, copy, and distribute.
- Follow-up by calling your media contacts and building their interest in the campaign. Tell them about the media kit available on the Fire Commissioner's Office website and provide them with pictures and activities of your own fire department and personnel.
- Encourage media participation by holding contests, handing out prizes and/or recognizing their efforts with a certificate.
- You may also want to organize an interview with local television stations. Prepare exciting posters, graphs, charts, and pictures. Encourage the media to advertise your message by explaining these exciting attention grabbers, which will likely encourage them to advertise your activities as they encourage good viewer ratings.

2. Fundraising

- Local business leaders can sponsor your messages in the following ways: display and hang fire prevention and safety banners and posters in offices, windows and outside storefronts, pass out fire safety materials and advertisements to customers and clients, lend space for events and activities, donate prizes, products and materials, donate money, local media can donate airtime, donate volunteer time.
- Start early. A successful fundraising effort takes time.
- Develop a list of potential sponsors and participants. Ensure you include those organizations associated with safety, and include high profile organizations, such as major sports teams or role models. Approach as many of these potential sponsors as possible.
- Develop a budget for your campaign and a 'wish list' of supplies, refreshments, and fire safety materials that you need. By developing wish list of supplies, you can help sponsors identify the items that will be most valuable to you.
- Find ways to provide credit to your sponsors for their help, such as adding logos to handouts and giving acknowledgement in news releases.
- When asking for sponsorship, consider drafting a letter. Be specific about what you need and how you will give credit to their organization. Help them understand why safety is important and how the campaign will positively affect the community's or their organization's well-being. Be prepared to answer questions about where their funding will be used and listen carefully to what they want to give - they may offer something that you hadn't thought of. Remember to gracefully accept whatever they can provide.
- A fill in the blank fundraising support letter is available on the following page for you to download, copy, and distribute.

Fill in the Blank Fundraising Letter

Copy this letter on your fire department letterhead and fill in the blanks for a ready-to-use fundraising appeal.

Dear [name of contact]:
[Town/city/province] Fire Department is joining the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office in promoting holiday fire safety this December. The December holiday season is a time of high fire risk and danger. Fire deaths, injuries and property losses all significantly increase during this time of year. Our goal is to teach local families important life-saving fire prevention and safety messages during the December holidays.

I'm writing to ask [name of company/organization] to support the [town/city/province] Fire Department as we encourage community residents to participate in holiday fire prevention and safety this December. [Town/city/province] is planning to promote this safety campaign through [list activities that require funding, such as open houses, parades, safety fairs, community-wide smoke alarm installations, school and store visits/presentations, etc.] Your financial support would help us purchase and distribute [list materials] at these events. By contributing $____, you'll be demonstrating your commitment to the essential work of fire prevention, and making [town/city/province] a safer place.

In return, we'll recognize your support by [clearly explain how you plan to promote the organization's support of the Holiday Fire Safety Campaign in your community].

Because we all know that [name of company/organization] cares deeply about the well-being of families of our community, the [town/city/province] Fire Department thinks you would be a natural partner for our exciting upcoming December Holiday Fire Safety efforts. Through [name of company/organization's] support, the [town/city/province] Fire Department will reach more [town/city/province] residents than ever, educating them about the vital importance of holiday fire prevention and safety this December. There is growing proof that fire prevention campaigns save lives.

I've enclosed some holiday fire safety materials to help familiarize you with the program. I'll follow up with you next week, and look forward to speaking with you about ways we can work together to make [town/city/province] a safer place. I can be reached at [phone number] if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your name]
[Title]
[Fire Department]
[Town/city/province]
[Date]

December Holiday Fire Safety

Activities

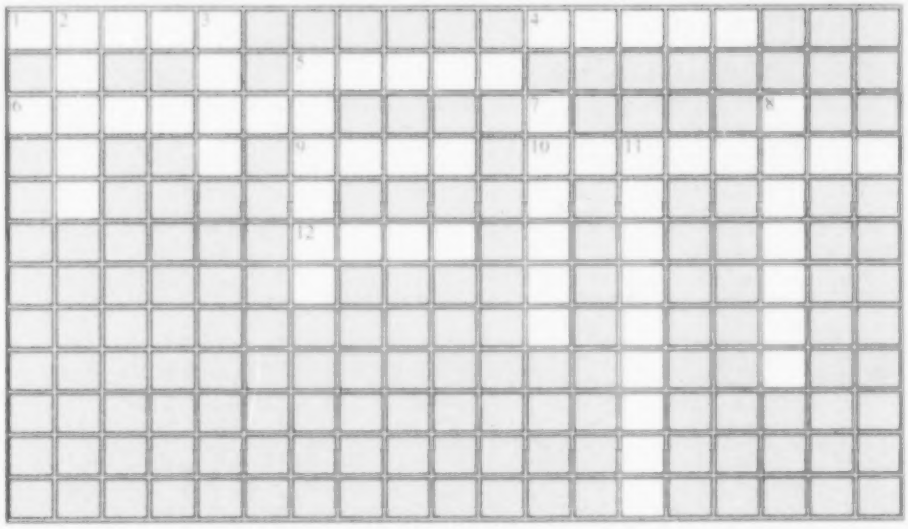
The following activities may be duplicated for use in local newspapers or other publications, on television stations, or may be distributed to schools or at public events where fire prevention and safety are promoted. Please use these activities to enhance your Holiday Fire Safety programs.

The first activity below may be used as a colouring contest or home hazard check activity. Have kids circle the hazards in this home.

December Holiday Fire Safety

Crossword Puzzle

Use the holiday fire safety clues below to fill in the blanks and complete the puzzle.



ACROSS

1. _____ your live Christmas tree regularly.
4. _____ low under smoke.
5. Make sure holiday decorations do not block _____.
6. Keep _____ away from all holiday decorations.
9. If you get burned: _____ a burn. Don't use cream or salve.
10. The number of home fires_____ during the December holidays.
12. Do not overload electrical _____-ins

DOWN

2. Test your smoke _____ at least once a month.
3. If you or your clothes catch on fire: stop, drop, and _____.
5. Design and regularly practice a home fire _____ plan with your family.
7. Turn off holiday _____ before you go to bed or leave the house.
8. Children should never play with _____, lighters, or candles.
11. Ensure holiday lights are in good _____. Replace wires with cracks, breaks or frays.

Answers: Across: water, crawl, exits, candles, cool, increase, plug; Down: alarm, roll, escape, lights, matches, condition

December Holiday Fire Safety

Christmas Tree Maze

At home you should plan and practice a home escape plan with your family. Just like your escape plan, find your way out of this maze.

Also, remember these safety tips for your home fire escape drill:

- Crawl low to avoid smoke and heat.
- Feel doors with the back of your hand before opening them.
- If the door feels hot, find a second exit.
- Get out and stay out.
- Go to your meeting place
- Call 9-1-1 from a neighbour's phone

December Holiday Fire Safety

Holiday Fire Safety Art and Craft Decoration

The activity:
A decorative fire safety message chain for kids to display in their homes during the December holiday season as they count down the days to a new, safe year.

What you need:
- Different colours of construction paper
- Markers
- Glitter
- Scissors
- Stapler

What to do:
- Have kids cut 31 strips of construction paper (one for each day of the month).
- Use the December Holiday "Fire Facts" tip sheets in this kit to have kids write a different holiday safety message on each one.
- Have kids decorate the strips with anything they want: markers, glitter, stickers…
- Staple the first strip into a loop and then make a chain of the strips by looping and then stapling them together.
- Have kids take the chain home to decorate their homes during the December holiday season.
- Each day, have kids take a link off the chain and check their home for the corresponding safety hazard.
- As the chain gets shorter, the kids can count down the days to a new, safe year!

Fire Facts The December Holiday Season

The Facts

- The December holiday season is a time of high fire risk and danger.
- During the December holiday season the incidence of fires and fire loses involving candles, home heating equipment, clothes dryers, and electrical sources increase significantly higher than these same categories for the rest of the year:

Safety Tips

Christmas Trees

- Ensure your artificial tree is "Fire Resistant".
- Ensure your live tree is fresh and moist at all times. Cut the stalk at an angle and keep the tree well watered. Dropping needles indicate a dry, highly flammable tree.
- Set up live and artificial trees away from fireplaces, heaters, and other heat sources and ensure it is not blocking an exit.

Lighting

- Indoors or outdoors, use only lights that have been tested and labelled by a recognized testing agency such as the ULC or CSA.
- Inspect holiday lights yearly for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections and throw out damaged sets.
- If using extension cords, make sure they are rated for the intended use and in good condition.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- Turn off all holiday lights when you go to bed or leave the house.
- Outdoor electric lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).

Decorations

- Choose non-flammable decorations whenever possible.
- Keep decorations, curtains, clothing and spray aerosol cans away from open flames or heat sources, such as lights, candles, heaters and fireplaces.
- Never put a candle on or near the branches of your Christmas tree.
- Mount candles on metal or glass candleholders, or place them in non-combustible containers.

Last updated/reviewed November 14, 2005

For more information, please contact the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 427-8392, or visit www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca.
Dial 310-000 for toll-free access outside of Edmonton

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Holiday entertaining

- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires. Do not leave your cooking unattended.
- Provide smokers with large, deep ashtrays and check them frequently. Douse butts completely in water before discarding.
- After a party, check inside and under upholstery and cushions for smouldering cigarettes.
- Keep matches and lighters up high and out site and reach of children.
- Test your smoke alarms and explain your fire escape plan to your guests.
- Do not smoke in bed, when tired or under the influence of alcohol or medication. Smoking is the most common cause of fire deaths.

General

- Have your chimney and furnace cleaned and professionally inspected prior to each winter season.
- Keep heating appliances at least one metre (three feet) away from combustibles.
- Electrical and heating systems can fail and become fire hazards. Ensure they are regularly checked by a professional, especially prior to the holiday season when fireplaces, heaters, appliances and other electrical equipment are in maximum use.
- Ensure you have working smoke alarms on every level of your home and a well rehearsed fire escape plan in case a fire does break out in their home.
- Have a multi purpose fire extinguisher in your home with a minimum rating of 3A, 10BC.
- Protect your home this holiday season by covering your decorations with fire retardant spray and decorating your Christmas tree with a fire alarm ornament. Contact the FCO for more information on these products.

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